

# In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Volume 2, Issue 11, May 23, 2003

## Inside this issue:

Message from the Mayor	1
District Infant Mortality Rate Decreases	2
Employee Profile	2
City Museum Opens Near New Convention Center	3
2003 DC Main Streets Neighborhoods Announced	3
Town Hall Meeting Highlights District's Work with Asian and Pacific Islander Community	4
Professional and Amateur Musicians Perform for Pleasure for Fun and for Free	4
District Activities	5
Community News	5
Upcoming Events	5

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Penn. Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20004  
Phone: (202) 727-2980  
Fax: (202) 727-6561  
<http://dc.gov>

## Message from the Mayor

As many of our citizens know, I am a strong advocate of quality educational choices, and I believe there are a variety of ways to achieve that goal. There has been much attention paid in recent weeks to my endorsement of the idea that as a city we explore school vouchers as a way to help the children of our city.

The District of Columbia already has a very strong example of school choice in its successful charter schools movement. Parents also may exercise choice within District public schools. Still, parents of school-aged children frequently tell me they want better options and more rapid improvements that will bring about better results for their children.

I believe that it's time to look at other solutions to provide educational choices for students. This issue is not just about vouchers—it is about increasing the availability of sound educational choices for all of our children. In my mind, the bottom line is that we must consider what's good for children and what provides them with the best education.

Other cities around the United States have some form of voucher program, and I am looking at the experiences of those cities. For the most part, these programs have been successful in increasing options for families. Additionally, there is a growing body of research that suggests school vouchers help increase student achievement among inner-city minority students.

My support for vouchers does not indicate a lack of confidence in our public schools. There has been significant progress in our schools over the last few years, and I am committed to continuing to make investments in public education. I will also continue to call upon the federal government to support our public schools by assuming the cost of state-level services such as special education.

Likewise, I will once again ask the federal government to continue its generous support of our city's charter schools, as evidenced in the \$17 million included in the Fiscal Year 2003 budget.

In other education news, on May 13, I helped citizens and neighborhood leaders in Columbia Heights celebrate the groundbreaking of the Columbia Heights Educational Campus. On the campus, we're joining Bell Multicultural High School and Lincoln Multicultural Middle School into one strong force for education.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Mandela's words resonate today. Little by little, step by step, we're creating lasting change in the District of Columbia.

Often, a great idea is sparked at the grass-roots level. That's why I'm a proponent of town hall meetings and citizen summits. I'm proud to say the idea for Columbia Heights Educational Campus originated within the local community—specifically with parents, the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission, and other community-based neighborhood organizations.



## AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

# District Infant Mortality Rate Decreases

Children are our most precious resource and, on May 13, I helped make an announcement that shows our city is making progress in protecting that resource. I was pleased to join the District's Department of Health to announce that the District of Columbia's infant mortality rate has dropped to the lowest rate in recent history.

Children are never more vulnerable than in their first years of life. We must give them the foundation to help them grow into strong, healthy, and productive adults. The District's infant mortality rate for 2001 dropped to 10.6 deaths per 1,000 births for 2001. The number of infant deaths decreased from 91 in 2000 to 81 in 2001.

We are well on our way to reaching the DC Healthy People 2010 goal of 8.0 deaths per 1,000 births. Over the last 10 years, (1992—2001), we have reduced the infant mortality rate by 42.1 percent. In 2001, the mortality rate for babies born to African-American mothers decreased to 14.5 per 1,000 births from 15.1 in 2000.

In 2001, the mortality rate for babies born to Hispanic/Latina mothers decreased by 50 percent, from 8.0 per 1,000 live births in 2000, to 4.0 per 1,000 live births in 2001. Births to teens (mothers under the age of 20 years) decreased to 1,017 in 2001 from 1,086 in 2000. The infant mortality rates declined in Wards 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7.

While we've made tremendous progress, we cannot stop here. We must continue to work together to protect our children—primarily in our most underserved communities. These decreases are a credit to our District government initiatives and partnership efforts with the community. For example, again this year, we had no infant deaths among the more than 900 women served by the Healthy Start Project, Teen Mothers Take Charge, and the Newborn Home Visiting Initiative. Our Healthy Start program is enrolling women in comprehensive early prenatal care.

Our 1 (800) MOM-BABY "Healthline" has been enhanced with additional staff and provides transportation for women and infants to medical appointments. Through the Mayor's Newborn Home Visiting Initiative, and in partnership with every hospital and the DC Developing Families Birthing Center, we guarantee that a nurse will visit every District newborn within 48 hours.

I extend my deepest thanks to the agencies, local social services, and health care professionals responsible for helping reduce the infant mortality rate. It is your strong efforts that have made our progress possible.



Mayor Williams—accompanied by 3-year-old Ward 8 resident, Briyona McMillan—helped the District's Department of Health announce the decline of the city's infant mortality rate to the lowest rate in recent history.

## Employee Profile

### Blanche Jones

May 18—May 23 is National Public Works Week. This year's theme is the "Strength of Public Works," highlighting the contributions of public works professionals committed to building and maintaining our communities.

One of the pillars of strength at the District's Department of Public Works (DPW) is Blanche Jones, Human Resource Development Specialist. As administrator and founder DPW's training arm, the Public Works Academy, Blanche is responsible for designing and implementing the employee development courses that improve performance, develop knowledge and skills, and build internal capacity to accomplish the department's mission.

In 2002, under Blanche's guidance, the Public Works Academy offered 19 courses that created 2,073 training experiences for DPW employees, an increase of 30 percent over 2001. Additionally, DPW is among only a handful of agencies that have offered cultural awareness training to front-line employees.

In 2003, DPW's academy will expand its cultural awareness program as part of our outreach commitment to residents with limited English proficiency. In 2001, Blanche partnered with Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) and the Academy of Hope (AOH) to offer Skills for Workplace Success, a series of adult literacy classes focused on reading and writing. The LVA/AOH workplace literacy program, funded through the DC State Education Office, is open to all DPW employees without cost. These classes provide a way for employees to improve their reading skills, boost their confidence, and prepare to move ahead in their jobs.

In addition to her duties as an educator, Blanche is also the chair of DPW's Equipment "Rodeo" Planning Committee. For the past two years, she has been the chief organizer for the Rodeo, which brings DPW employees together to test their operating skills in an American Public Works Association-sanctioned contest. Blanche earned a bachelor of science degree at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio; a master of arts degree at the University of the District of Columbia; has matriculated at the Howard University School of Divinity; and in 2000 became a Certified Public Manager through the George Washington University Center for Excellence in Municipal Management.

A Southwest Washington resident, Blanche truly exemplifies the "Strength of Public Works."



Blanche Jones



## City Museum Opens Near New Convention Center

May 15 was a great day for Washington, DC. On that day, I joined other local officials and citizens in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the City Museum of Washington, DC, located on K Street near the new Washington Convention Center. This was truly a special day for all of our citizens and certainly reason to celebrate.

The Historical Society of Washington, DC, has worked for many years on the creation of a museum dedicated to exploring and displaying the history of Washington, DC, to both visitors and residents. The Historical Society sponsors educational programs, including National History Day in Washington, DC, a yearlong program in which thousands of students participate.

I'm proud to say that the District of Columbia is a major contributor to the City Museum. The District government provided the Historical Society with a 99-year lease for the Carnegie Library building—at the rate of \$1 per year.

Our great city has a number of historic landmarks. We also have a number of museums in the District that recognize the history of women, art, culture, and America—but there is none quite like the City Museum. This is our museum. It is a museum dedicated solely to the history of Washington, DC.

When we broke ground for this museum in 2001, I was eager to see it to completion. Our residents and visitors who are interested in learning more about the real Washington, DC will have an opportunity to explore the real city at this museum, thanks to the synergy, energy, and investment on the part of so many people.

The City Museum will promote knowledge of the past to assist in a better understanding of the future.

## 2003 DC Main Streets Neighborhoods Announced

When I talk about tourism, I tell people they need to explore the District's neighborhoods. When I talk about shopping, I tell people they need to shop in our neighborhoods. The District's commercial revitalization program, "reStore DC" and its "DC Main Streets" component are giving residents and visitors new and improved destinations to explore and shop.

In 2002, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development designed and launched reStore DC, a new initiative to coordinate agency activities that support retention, expansion and attraction of retail stores to our neighborhood business districts. The initiative, emphasizes strengthening organizations engaged in revitalization activity, promoting and marketing business districts, and improving the physical appearance and economic health of neighborhood business districts.

The four programs in the initiative offer financial and technical assistance to non-profit organizations that seek to undertake commercial revitalization activities, along with technical and financial assistance for small businesses.

Most of our businesses in the District are small businesses—so with reStore DC and DC Main Streets, we're supporting and expanding our home-grown retail. While we're focusing on bringing anchor retailers to our city, like H & M to Metro Center and Georgetown and Target to Columbia Heights, DC Main Streets helps us grow the unique shopping options at the core of our economy.

DC Main Streets provides five years of comprehensive technical and financial assistance for neighborhood business districts to implement revitalization programs for their older and traditional neighborhoods, allowing citizens to help manage retail investment growth.

On May 7, I was pleased to announce the 2003 DC Main Streets Neighborhoods:

- (Ward 1) Adams Morgan
- (Ward 8) Anacostia
- (Ward 5) Brookland (12th Street, NE)
- (Ward 2) Dupont Circle (including 17th Street, NW)
- (Ward 4) Gateway Georgia Avenue
- (Ward 1) Mount Pleasant
- (Ward 2) Shaw (7th and 9th Streets)

As many of our citizens already know, two goals in my recent inaugural address were to bring economic development to every corner of the city and to offer the lifestyle amenities to attract 100,000 new residents to the District. We're doing both with reStore DC.



Mayor Williams joined council members and local officials to celebrate opening the City Museum near the new Washington Convention Center.

## Town Hall Meeting Highlights District's Work with Asian and Pacific Islander Community

On May 13, I held a very important town hall meeting with the District of Columbia's Asian and Pacific Islander community. The timing was perfect, as May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

During Asian Pacific American Heritage month, we should especially recognize the contributions to our country made by Americans of Asian descent. Like other immigrants before them, they have made their mark wherever they live or work. Diversity is our strongest asset as a city. I'm happy when we can come together, share and learn about the Asian and Pacific Islander community.

I'm proud to say that Asian Americans are helping shape the District's economy. In our city, 60 percent of "Mom and Pop" stores are owned by Asian Pacific Americans and two-thirds of the small-business licenses issued in the city are to Asian Pacific Americans. The vast majority of taxi companies operating in the District are owned by South Asians.

My goal is to deliver on the District government's pledge to serve all the people who live and work in the city. Language, ethnicity, and culture should not be barriers for our government to do its job effectively. A top priority of my administration is to make services more accessible to people with limited English language skills. Visit [www.dc.gov](http://www.dc.gov), and under "Living and Working in DC" you'll find our city services guides in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

I applaud District agencies for their continued efforts to translate materials into Asian languages. The Departments of Employment Services, Human Services, Health, Parks and Recreation, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, and the Metropolitan Police Department are among agencies that deserve special recognition.

Having information translated into your own language is helpful, but it's even more helpful when there is someone who speaks your language at a government agency. That's why I'm committed to make sure our offices have a more diverse workforce and continue to use AT&T's telephonic translation services.

Several departments have hired bilingual workers. The Department of Health hired 14 additional bilingual employees in the areas of Health Promotion, Environmental Health, and Primary Care and Prevention Planning. The Department of Mental Health hired a much-needed Vietnamese speaking mental health professional to serve Vietnamese customers.

Seventeen major agencies have been working with the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs to develop an annual action plan to address the needs of the Asian community in five specific areas: translation, diversity in the workplace, cultural awareness training, community partnerships, and community outreach.

I'm proud of the progress we've made, and I look forward to continued progress in the future.

## Professional and Amateur Musicians Perform for Pleasure for Fun and for Free

The people who brought you "Party Animals" invite you to dance in the streets as part of the first citywide annual *Fête de la Musique*, an international festival that celebrates the musical talents of local individuals, groups, amateurs, and professional artists. From June 20-22, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities will host and promote over 100 venues in the city, where residents and visitors can enjoy free live music everywhere—from grocery and department stores, office lobbies, museums, and hospitals to concert halls, barber shops, and street corners. There will be sponsored stages featuring local, regional, and national acts, along with spontaneous performances by beginner and amateur musicians who are encouraged to play in public spaces throughout the city. The DC *Fête* kicks off with a concert at the Ronald Reagan Center at noon on Friday, June 20. The rest of the weekend features national, local, and international performances at various locations throughout the city. For more information, visit <http://dcarts.dc.gov>.





## District Activities–Tivoli Theater Groundbreaking



On May 13, Mayor Williams helped bring down the old "Tivoli" sign at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Tivoli Theater renovation, a \$37M mixed-use development project slated for the national historic landmark site in Columbia Heights.



On May 13, Mayor Williams met with reporters and community members at the groundbreaking at the Tivoli Theater site, where a new performance facility, neighborhood-oriented retail, modern grocery store, and residential town homes will be created.

## Community News

- [Mayor Williams, Chief Ramsey Unveil Community Policing Plan](#)
- [District Launches Next Generation Web Portal](#)
- [Mayor Makes Appointments to Board of Education, NCRC, and Various Agencies](#)

[View all News Releases](#)

## Upcoming Events

**05/29 39th Annual Senior Citizens' Day and Service Expo**  
10 am—2 pm  
Washington Convention Center  
801 Mount Vernon Place  
For ticket information, call (202) 727-8369.

**05/29 to 06/08 Hamlet (Free For All) by William Shakespeare**  
7:30 pm  
Carter Barron Amphitheatre  
16th Street and Colorado Avenue, NW

**06/13 Orange Hat Patrol Workshop: Start and Manage an Orange Hat Patrol in Your Neighborhood**  
Metropolitan Police Department and Mid-Atlantic Regional Community Policing Institute  
9 am—1 pm  
Bruce-Monroe Elementary School  
3012 Georgia Avenue, NW (Multipurpose Room)

[View the Mayor's daily schedule](#)

